THE ADVENTURE OF THE ENGINEER'S THUMB.

By Sir A. Conan Doyle.

room. I dressed hurriedly, for I knew by experience that railway cases were seldom trivial, and hastened down stairs. As I descended, my old ally, the guard, came out of the room and closed the door tightly behind him.

"I've got him here." he whispered, jerking his thumb over his shoulder: "You must know," said he, "that I jerking his thumb over his shoulder: "You must know," said he, "that I jerking his it, then?" I asked, for his manner suggested that it was some strange creature which he had caged up in my room.

"It was apprenticed to Venner & Matheson, the well-known firm, of Green.

left it upon the side table.'

I took it up and glaced at it. "Mr. ivtor Hatherley, hydraulic engineer, A, Victoria street (3d floor)." That was the name, style, and abode of my morning visitor. "I regret that I have kept you waiting," said I, sitting down in my library chair. "You are fresh from a night journey, I understand, which in itself is a monotonous occupation."

monotonous," said he, and laughed. He monotonous, said he, and laughed. He laughed very heartily, with a high, ringing note, leaning back in his chair and shaking his sides. All my medical instincts rose up against that laugh. "Stop it!" I cried; "pull yourself together!" and I poured out some water

It was useless, however. Hs was off in one of those hysterical in one of those hysterical outbursts which come upon a strong nature when some great crisis is over and, gone. Presently he came to himself once more, very weary and blushing hotly.
"I have been making a fool of my-

lf," he gasped.
"Not at all. Drink this." I dashed some brandy into the water, and the color began to come back to his blood-That's better!" said he. "And now,

doctor, perhaps you would kindly at-tend to my thumb, or rather to the place where my thumb used to be." He unwound the handkerchief and held out his hand. It gave even my hardened nerves a shudder to look at it. There were four protruding fingers and a horrid red, spongy surface where the thumb should have been. It had been hacked and torn right out from the roots.

"Good heavens!" I cried, "this is a terrible injury. It must have bled con Yes, it did. I fainted when it was

done, and I think that I must have been senseless for a long time. When I came to I found that it was still bleeding, so I tied one end of my handkerchief very tightly round the wrist, and

'Excellent! You should have been 'It is a question of hydraulics, you see, and came within my own prov

"This has been done," said I, exam-

sharp instrument."

"A thing that a cleaver," said he.

"An accident, I presume?" 'By no means.

What! a murderous attack?" 'Very murderous indeed." 'You horrify me.'

"You horrify me."
I sponged the wound, cleaned it, dressed it, and finally covered it with cotton wadding and carbolized bandages. He lay back without wincing, ugh he bit his lip from time

'How is that," I asked, when I had Capital! Between your brandy and

your bandage I feel a new man. I was very weak, but I have had a good deal to go through."
"Perhaps you had better not speak of the matter. It is evidently trying to

strange creature which he had caged up in my room.

"It's a new patient," he whispered. "I thought I'd bring him 'round myself; then he couldn't slip away. There he is, all safe and sound. I must go now, doctor: I have my dootles, just the same as you." And off he went, this trusty tout, without even giving me time to thank him.

I entered my consulting room and found a gentleman seated by the table. He was quietly dressed in a suit of heather tweed, with a soft cloth cap, which he had laid down upon my books. Round one of his hands he had a hand-which he had laid down upon my books. Round one of his hands he had a hand-which wish which was mottled all over with blood stains. He was young, not

which he had laid down upon my broke. Round one of his hands he had a handkerchief which was mottled all ofer with blood stains. He was young, not more than five and twory. I should say, with a strong, masch me face, but he was exceedingly pale, and gave me the impression of a man who was suffering from some strong agitation, which it took all his strength of mind to control.

"I am sorry to knock you up so early, doctor," said he, "but I have had a very serious accident during the night. I came in by train this morning, and on inquiring at Paddington as to where I might find a doctor, a worthy fellow very kindly escorted me here. I gave whole face sharpened away into nose and chin, and the skin of his cheeks was drawn quite tense over his outstanding bones. Yet this emaciation seemed to be his natural habit, and due to no disease, for his eye was bright, his step brisk, and his bearing assured. He was plainly but neatly dressed, and his age, I should judge, would be nearer 40 than

'Mr. Hatherley?' said he, with something of a German accent. You have been recommended to me, Mr. Hatherley, as being a man who is not only proficient in his profession, but is also discreet and capable of preserv-

'I bowed, feeling as flattered as any young man would at such an address. 'May I ask who it was that gaye me so good a character?" "Well, perhaps it is better that I should not tell you that just at this

moment. I have it from the same source that you are both an orphan d a bachelor, and are residing alone

That is quite correct.' I answered but you will excuse me if I say that I cannot see how all this bears upon my professional qualifications, I under-stood that it was on a professional matter that you wished to speak to

Undoubtedly so. But you will find that all I say is really to the point. I have a professional commission for you, but absolute secrecy is quite essential-absolute secrecy, you under-stand, and of course we may expect that more from a man who is alone than from one who lives in the bosom of his family.'

'If I promise to keep a secret,' said 'you may absolutely depend upon

my doing so.'
"He looked very hard at me as I spoke, and it seemed to me that I had never seen so suspicious and question-Do you promise, then?' said he.

Yes, I promise.' 'Absolute and complete silence before, during, and after? No reference to the matter at all, either in word or

"'I have already given you my word.'
"'Very good.' He suddenly sprang
up, and darting like lightning across

the room, he flung open the door. The passage outside was empty. "That's all right, said he, coming back. 'I know that clerks are sometimes curious as to their master's affairs. Now we can talk in safety.' He drew up his chair very close to mine

and began to start at me again with the

remater. It is evidently trying to your nerves."

"Oh! no, not now. I shall have to tell my tale to the police; but, between ourselves, if it were not for the convincing evidence of this wound of mine, I should be surprised if they believed my statement; for it is a very extraordinary one, and I have not standing machine which has got out of gear. If you show us what is wrong we shall soon set it right ourselves. What do you think of such a commission as that?"

"What, you dig fuller's earth in the house."

"No, no. This is only where we compress it. But never mind that. All we wish you to do is, to examine the machine and let us know what is wrong with it."

"We went upstairs together, the colonel first with the lamp, the fat manager and I behind him. It was a labyrinth of an old house, with corridors, passages, narrow winding stair-cases and little low doors, the thresholds of which were hollowed out by the generations who had crossed them. There were no carpets and no signs of any furniture above the ground floor, while the plaster was peeling off the window, and lowed the passage and little to be plaster was peeling off the window, and lowed the passage than the ruffian who pursued me. If she were followed the ground floor, while the plaster was peeling off the were ill-used then at any view I were compressed them.

lent!"

"You are mad. Elise!" he shouted, struggling to break away from her. You will be the ruin of us. He has seen too much. Let me pass, I say!" He dashed her to one side, and, rushing to the window, cut at me with his heavy weapon. I had let myself go, and was hanging by the hands on the sill, when his blow fell. I was conscious of a dull pain, my grip loosened and I fell into the garden below.

"I was shaken but not hurt by the

fall; so I picked myself up and rushed off among the bushes as hard as I could run, for I understood that I was far from being out of danger yet. Suddenly, however, as I ran, a deadly dizziness and sickness came over me. I glanced down at my hand, which was throbbing painfully, and then, for the liftst time saw that my thumb had been Dr. Becher a German, very thin, with

to my feet with the feeling that I might hardly yet be safe from my pursuers. But, to my astonishment, when I came to look round me, neither house nor garden were to be seen. I had been lying in an angle of the hedge close by the high road, and just a little lower down was a long building, which proyed, upon my approaching it, to be the very station at which I had arrived upon the previous night. Were

"'Oh, no, it is in the house.'
"'What, you dig fuller's earth in the it is high, but it may be that you can it in an it."

not be more than thirty feet down. I clambered out upon the sill, but I hest-tated to jump until I should have heard what passed between my saviour and the ruffian who pursued me. If she were ill-used, then at any risk I was determined to go back to her assistance. The thought had hardly flashed through my mind before he was at a clever gaug was at work." aid the

the landscape of a dull pain, my grip loosened the landscape "A house on fire?" asked Bradstreet, as the train steamed off again on its

among the rosebushes.

"How long I remained unconscious I

How long I remained unconscious I cannot tell. It must have been a very long time, for the moon had sunk, and a bright morning was breaking when I came to myself. My clothes were all sodden with dew, and my coat sleeve was drenched with blood from my wounded thumb. The smarting of it recalled in an instant all the particulars of my night's adventure, and I sprang to my feet with the feeling that I might hardly yet be safe from my pursuers.

"You are all wrong."
"But we can't all be."

ance. The thought had hardly flashed through my mind before he was at the door, pushing his way past her; but she threw her arms round him and tried to hold him back.

"Fritz! Fritz! she cried, in English, 'remember your promise after the last time. You said it, should not be again. He will be silent! Oh, he will be silent! The should do not the should have been turning out half-crowns by the thousands. We even traced them as far as Reading, but could get no further, for they had covered their tracks in a way that showed they were very old hands. But now, thanks to this lucky chance, I think that we have got them right enough."

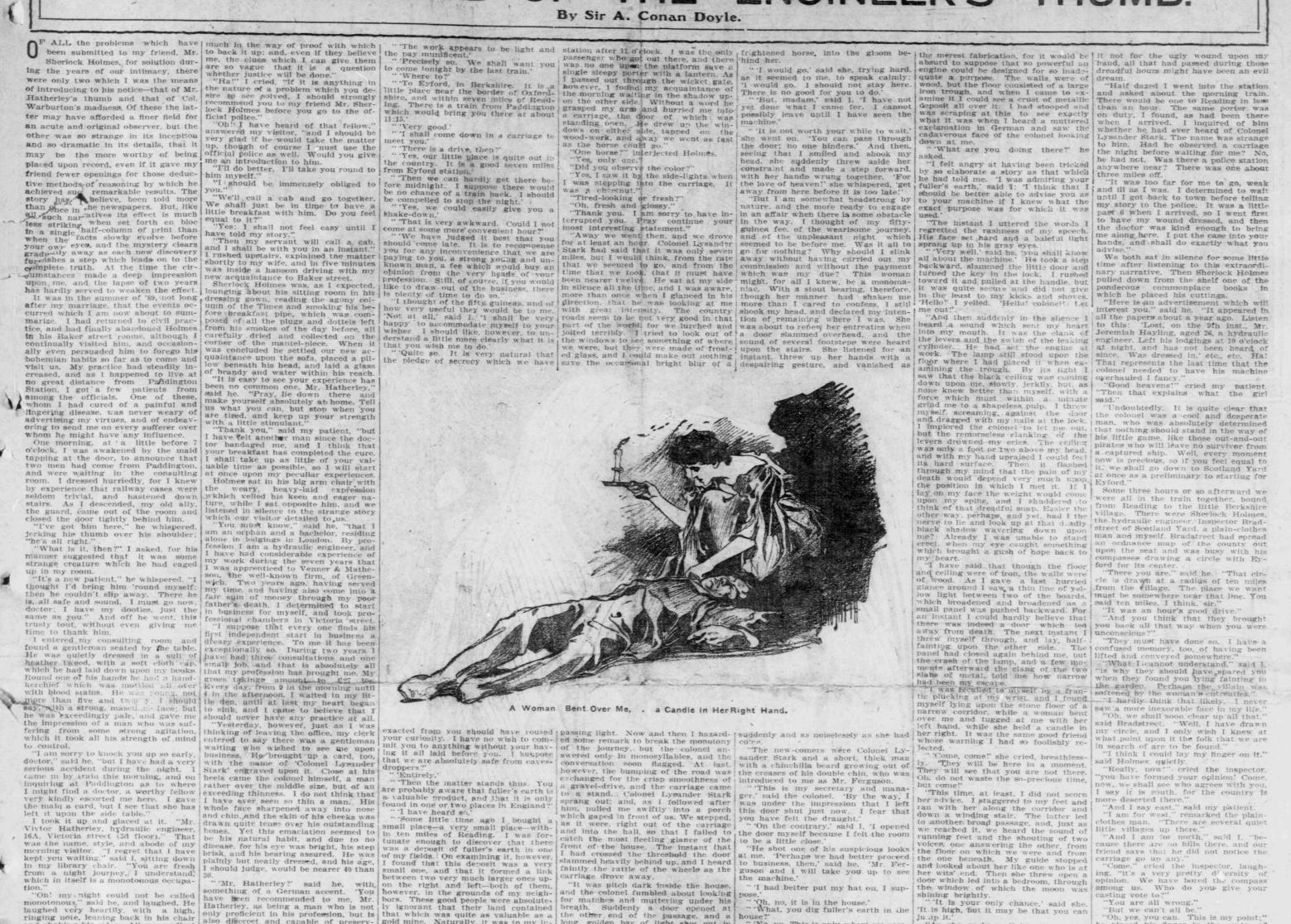
"Yes, sir." said the station master.

"When did it break out?"
"I hear that it was during the night, sir, but it has got worse, and the whole

cut off and that the blood was pouring from my wound. I endeavored to tie my handkerchief round it. but there came a sudden buzzing in my ears, and

came a sudden buzzing in my ears, and next moment I fell in a dead faint among the rosebushes.

"How long I remained unconscious I cannot tell. It must have been a very long time, for the moon had super and the looks as if a little good long time, for the moon had super and he looks as if a little good long time, for the moon had super and he looks as if a little good long time, and he looks as if a little good long time.



of my fields. On examining it, however, I found that this deposit was a very small one, and that it formed a link between two very much larger ones upon the right and left—both of them, however, in the grounds of my neighbors. These good people were absolutely ignorant that their land contained that which was quite as valuable as a gold mine. Naturally, it was to my in gold mine. Naturally, it was to my in-terest to buy their land before they discovered its true value; but, unfortunately, I had no capital by which I could do this. I took a few of my and secretly work our own little de-posit, and that in this way we should earn the money which would enable us to buy the neighboring fields. This us to buy the neignboring neids. Inis we have now been doing for some time, and in order to help us in our operations we erected a hydraulic press. This press, as I have already explained, has got out of order, and we hat we had hydraulic engineers coming to our little house, it would arouse inquiry, and then, if the facts came out, it would be good-by to any chance

of getting these fields and carrying out our plans. That is why I have made you promise me that you will not tell a human being that you are going to Eyford tonight. I hope that I make it all plain? nake it all plain?'
'I quite follow you.' said I. 'The
ly point which I could not quite unrstand, was what use you could make
a hydraulic press in excavating ful-

r's earth: which, as I understand, is ug out like gravel from a pit.' "'Ah!' said he, carelessly, 'we have own process. We compress the h into bricks, so as to remove them without revealing what they are. But that is a mere detail. I have taken you fully into my confidence now, Mr. Hatheriey, and I have shown how I trust you.' He arose as he spoke. 'I shall expect you, then, at Eyford at 11:15.

I shall certainly be there. "And not a word to a sou!.' He looked at me with a last, long questioning gaze, and then, pressing my hand in a cold, dank grasp, he hurried

from the room. "Well, when I came to think it all over in cool blood, I was very much astonished, as you may both think, at and began to start at me again with the same questioning and thoughtful look. "A feeling of repusion, and of contenting akin to fear had began to tise within me at the strange antics of this fleshless man. Even my dread of losing a client could not restrain me from showing my impatience.

"I beg that you will state your business, sir, said I: "my time is of value. Heaven forgive me for that last sentence, but the words came to my lips. "How would fifty guineas for a night's work suit you?" he asked.

"Most admirably."

"Most admirably."

And of course, I was glad, for the fee was at least tenfold what I should have asked had I set a price upon my own services, and it was possible that this order might lead to other ones. On the other hand, the face and manner of my patron had made an unpleasant impression upon me, and I could not think that his explanation of the fuller's earth was sufficient to explain the necessity for my coming at midnight, and his extreme anxiety lest I should tell anyone of my errand.

for matches and muttering under his breath. Suddenly a door opened at the other, end of the passage, and a long, golden bar of light shot out in our direction. It grew broader, and a woman appeared with a lamp in her ately, I had no capital by which I band, which she held above her head, could do this. I took a few of my friends into the secret, however, and they suggested that we should quietly and secretly work our own little de the secretly work our own li shone upon her dark dress I knew that it was a rich material. She spoke a few words in a foreign tongue in a tone as though asking a question, and when my companion answered in a gruff monosyllable she gave such a start that the lamp nearly fell from her hand. Colonel Stark went up to her, whispered something in her ear, and then, pushing her back into the room whence she had come he walked to

"Perhaps you will have the kindness to wait in this room for a few minutes,' said he, throwing open another door. It was a quiet, little, plainly furnished room, with a round table in the center on which several German books were scattered. Colonel Stark laid down the lamp on the top of a harmonium beside the door. 'I shall not keep you waiting an instant,' said he, and vanished into the darkness.

"I gianced at the books mean the

but whether north, south, east or west had no idea. For that matter, Readng, and possibly other large towns, were within that radius, so the place night not be so secluded, after all. Yet was quite certain, from the absolute tillness, that we were in the country, paced up and down the room, hum-

any furniture above the ground floor while the plaster was peeling off the walls and the damp was breaking through in green, unhealthy blotches whispered, pushing her back into the room then, pushing her back into the room whence she had come, he walked toward me again with the lamp in his hand.

"Perhaps you will have the kindness, "Perhaps you will have the kindness," I disregarded them, and I kept a keen the warnings of the lady, even though I disregarded them, and I kept a keen the warnings of the lady, even though I disregarded them, and I kept a keen the warnings of the lady, even though I disregarded them. eye upon my two companions. Ferguson appeared to be a merose and si-lent man, but I could see from the lit-tie he said that he was at least a fel-

low-countryman.

"Col. Lysander Stark stopped at last before a low door, which he unlocked. Within was a small, square room, in which the three of us could hardly get ished into the darkness.

"I gianced at the books upon the table, and in spite of my ignorance of German I could see that two of them were treatises on science, the others being volumes of poetry. Then I walked across to the window, hoping that I might catch some glimpse of the countryside, but an oak shutter, heavily barred, was folded across it. It was a wonderfully silent house. There was an old clock ticking loudly somewhere was an old clock ticking loudly somewhere wenderfully silent house. There was an old clock ticking loudly somewhere in the passage, but otherwise everything was deadly still. A vague feeling of uneasiness began to steal over me. Who were these German people and what were they doing, living in this strange out-of-the-way place? And where was the place? I was ten uniles or so from Eyford, that was all I knew, but whether north, south, east or west.

There are small lateral columns of water outside which receive the force and which transmit and multiply it in the manner which is familiar to you. The machine goes readily enough, but there is some stiffness in the working of it, and it has lost a little of its force. Perhaps you will have the gool-mess to look it over and to show us how we can set it right.'

"I took the lamp from him and I ex-

we can set it right."
"I took the lamp from him and I examined the machine very thoroughly. It was indeed a gigantic one and capable of exercising enormous pressure When I passed outside, however, and pressed down the levers which con-trolled it, I knew at once by the whisming a tune under my breath to keep up my spirits, and feeling that I was thoroughly earning my fifty-guinea fee.
"Suddenly, without any preliminary sound in the midst of the utter stillness, the door of my room swung slead."

"Suddenly my fifty-guinea fee.
"Suddenly without any preliminary sound in the midst of the utter stillness, the door of my room swung slead." patron had made an unpleasant impression upon me, and I could not think that his explanation of the fuller's earth was sufficient to explain the necessity for my coming at midnight, and his extreme anxiety lest I should tell anyone of my errand. However, I threw all fears to the wind, ate a hearty supper, drove to Paddington and started off, having obeyed to the letter the injunction as to holding my tongue.

"At Reading I had to change not only my carriage, but my station. However, I was in time for the last train to Eyford, and I reached the little dim-lit